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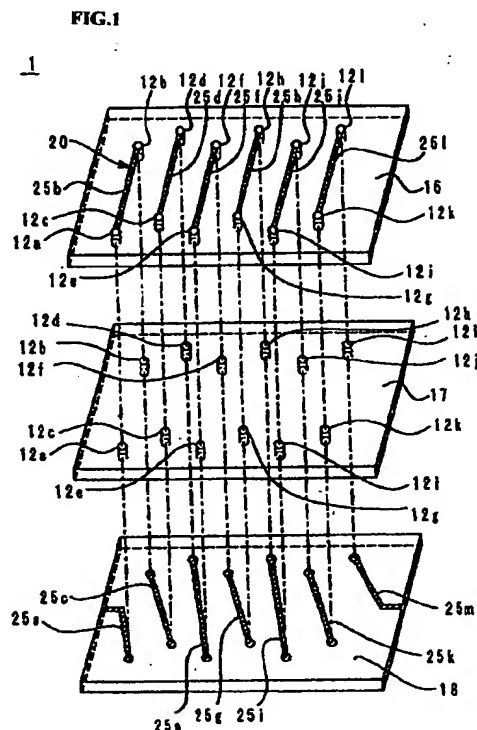
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(54) Chip antenna

(57) A chip antenna (1) capable of reducing the spiral pitch of an antenna line (20) to be smaller than that of a conventional one. Conductor patterns (25a - m) are electrically connected sequentially in series through via holes (12a - 1) so as to form a spiral antenna line (20). The antenna line (20) has a winding axis which is arranged either in a zigzag manner or along a straight line. Adjacent wound portions have an equal diameter or width or the adjacent portions may have unequal widths. Since adjacent via holes are arranged in a staggered arrangement with each other, the distance (P2) between the adjacent via holes is larger than the spiral pitch (P1) of the antenna line, allowing the adjacent portions to be closer together than a conventional chip antenna, thereby allowing the resonance frequency to be reduced.



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Description**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION****1. Field of the Invention**

[0001] The present invention relates to chip antennas, and in particular relates to a chip antenna for mobile communication units such as portable telephone terminals and pagers and a chip antenna for local area networks (LANs).

2. Description of the Related Art

[0002] It is important for antennas for use in mobile communication units and LANs to be small-sized. As one of the antennas satisfying such a demand, a helical-type chip antenna is known.

[0003] An example of a conventional helical-type chip antenna is shown in Figs. 9 and 10. A chip antenna 100 comprises a rectangular-solid dielectric base body 121, an antenna line 130 disposed in the dielectric base body 121, a feed terminal 110, and a fixing terminal 111. One end 134 of the antenna line 130 is electrically connected to the feed terminal 110 and the other end 135 is unconnected.

[0004] The antenna line 130 is formed by alternately connecting a conductor pattern 131 and a via hole 132 in series. The antenna line 130 has a helical structure having a uniform width and height (or diameter) and the pitch P, and is wound about a straight axis CL in the horizontal direction (direction of arrow X in the drawing).

[0005] In order to enable a chip antenna also to be used at low frequencies, the chip antenna is generally required to reduce the resonance frequency. One of the methods for reducing the resonance frequency of the chip antenna is to decrease the spiral pitch of the antenna line.

[0006] However, since in the conventional chip antenna 100, adjacent via holes 132 are close to each other, there is a problem that the spiral pitch of the antenna line 130 cannot be reduced much due to limitation in manufacturing.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] Accordingly, it is an object of the present invention to provide a chip antenna capable of reducing the spiral pitch of an antenna line so that it is smaller than that of a conventional chip antenna.

[0008] In order to achieve the above-mentioned object, in accordance with a first aspect of the present invention, a chip antenna comprises a base body, an antenna line disposed in the base body and being spirally wound, and a feed terminal disposed on a surface of the base body and being electrically connected to one end of the antenna line, wherein the antenna line has a winding axis which curves in a zigzag manner.

[0009] In accordance with a second aspect of the present invention, a chip antenna comprises a base body, an antenna line disposed in the base body and being spirally wound, and a feed terminal disposed on a surface of the base body and being electrically connected to one end of the antenna line, wherein the antenna line has a substantially straight winding axis, and adjacent wound portions have a different width or diameter.

[0010] More specifically, the antenna line may be formed by electrically connecting a plurality of conductor patterns disposed in the base body in series by via holes which are arranged in the base body in a staggered arrangement.

[0011] By the structures described above, the minimum spiral pitch of the antenna line can be smaller than that of a conventional antenna, thereby enabling the resonance frequency of the chip antenna to be reduced to less than that of a conventional chip antenna.

[0012] A chip antenna according to the present invention may further comprise an opposing conductor for adjusting the resonance frequency, wherein the opposing conductor opposes at least one of the plurality of conductor patterns forming the antenna line and is electrically connected to part of the plurality of conductor patterns. Thereby, when the area of the opposing conductor for adjusting the resonance frequency is changed, the resonance frequency of the chip antenna can be adjusted without changing the number of winding turns of the antenna line.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING(S)**[0013]**

Fig. 1 is an assembly view of a chip antenna according to a first embodiment of the present invention; Fig. 2 is a perspective view of the chip antenna shown in Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 is a plan view of the chip antenna shown in Fig. 1;

Fig. 4 is an assembly view of a chip antenna according to a second embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 5 is a perspective view of the chip antenna shown in Fig. 4;

Fig. 6 is a plan view of the chip antenna shown in Fig. 4;

Fig. 7 is a plan view of a chip antenna according to a third embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 8 is a plan view of a chip antenna according to another embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 9 is a perspective view of a conventional chip antenna; and

Fig. 10 is a plan view of the chip antenna shown in Fig. 9.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

[0014] Embodiments according to the present invention will be described below with reference to the attached drawings.

(First Embodiment, Figs. 1 to 3)

[0015] Fig. 1 is an assembly view showing a chip antenna 1; Fig. 2 is an external perspective view of the chip antenna 1 shown in Fig. 1; and Fig. 3 is a plan view of the chip antenna 1 shown in Fig. 1.

[0016] As is shown in Fig. 1, the chip antenna 1 comprises a dielectric sheet 16 having conductor patterns 25b, 25d, 25f, 25h, 25j, and 25l and via holes 12a to 12l formed thereon, a dielectric sheet 17 having the via holes 12a to 12l formed thereon, and a dielectric sheet 18 having conductor patterns 25a, 25c, 25e, 25g, 25i, 25k, and 25m formed on the top face of the dielectric sheet 18.

[0017] The conductor patterns 25a to 25m are formed on the surfaces of the respective dielectric sheets 16 and 18 by a method such as printing, sputtering, vapor deposition, pasting, or plating. As a material of the conductor patterns 25a to 25m, Ag, Ag-Pd, Au, Pt, Cu, Ni, etc., are used. As a material of the dielectric sheets 16 to 18, a resin such as a fluorocarbon resin, ceramic containing barium oxide, aluminum oxide, silica, etc. as principal ingredients, and a mixture of ceramic and a resin are used. The via holes 12a to 12l may be formed by filling holes formed on the dielectric sheets 16 and 17 with conductive paste.

[0018] The conductor patterns 25a to 25m are electrically connected sequentially in series by the via holes 12a to 12l formed on the dielectric sheets 16 and 17 so as to form a spiral antenna line 20. One end of the spiral antenna line 20 (i.e., the conductor pattern 25a) is exposed to the left side of the conductor sheet 18 and the other end (i.e., the conductor pattern 25m) is exposed to the right side of the conductor sheet 18.

[0019] The conductor patterns 25b, 25d, 25f, 25h, 25j, and 25l formed on the surface of the dielectric sheet 16 have an equal length and are arranged in parallel to each other at intervals of a predetermined pitch. The conductor patterns 25b, 25f, and 25j and the conductor patterns 25d, 25h, and 25l are each alternately arranged in a staggered arrangement. Similarly, the conductor patterns 25a, 25c, 25e, 25g, 25i, 25k, and 25m formed on the top surface of the dielectric sheet 18 also have an equal length and are arranged in parallel to each other at intervals of a predetermined pitch. Furthermore, the via holes 12a, 12c, 12e, 12g, 12i, and 12k are alternately arranged in a staggered arrangement, and the via holes 12b, 12d, 12f, 12h, 12j, and 12l are alternately arranged in a staggered arrangement.

[0020] The dielectric sheets 16 to 18 described above, as shown in Fig. 1, are sequentially deposited

and unitarily burned so as to form a dielectric base body 11 as shown in Fig. 2. At both ends of the dielectric base body 11, terminals 21 and 22 are respectively disposed. The terminal 21 is electrically connected to the conductor pattern 25a while the terminal 22 is electrically connected to the conductor pattern 25m. Any one of the terminals 21 and 22 is used as a feed terminal and the other is for as a fixing terminal. The terminals 21 and 22 may be formed of conductive paste such as Ag, Ag-Pd, Cu, or Ni by a method such as coating, burning, or further wet plating thereon.

[0021] In the chip antenna 1 formed as described above, as shown in Fig. 3, the antenna line 20 has a winding axis CL which curves in a zigzag manner, and adjacent spiral portions have an equal diameter. Since adjacent via holes (the via holes 12a, 12c, 12e, 12g, 12i, and 12k, for example) are arranged in a staggered arrangement with each other, the distance P2 between adjacent via holes (the via holes 12a and 12c, for example) is larger than the spiral pitch P1 of the antenna line 20. Therefore, even when the spiral pitch P1 of the antenna line 20 is reduced to be smaller, the distance P2 between the adjacent via holes 12a and 12c can be larger than that of a conventional antenna line, so that limitation in manufacturing may be circumvented. Consequently, the minimum spiral pitch of the antenna line 20 can be smaller than that of a conventional one, thereby enabling the resonance frequency of the chip antenna 1 to be reduced approximately 20% smaller than that of a conventional chip antenna.

(Second Embodiment, Figs. 4 to 6)

[0022] Fig. 4 is an assembly view of a chip antenna 2; Fig. 5 is an exterior perspective view of the chip antenna 2 shown in Fig. 4; Fig. 6 is a plan view of the chip antenna 2 shown in Fig. 4; however, in Fig. 6, an opposing conductor 23 for adjusting the resonance frequency and a via hole 32m are not shown.

[0023] As is shown in Fig. 4, the chip antenna 2 comprises a dielectric sheet 15 having the opposing conductor 23 for adjusting the resonance frequency and the via hole 32m formed thereon, a dielectric sheet 16 having conductor patterns 45b, 45d, 45f, 45h, 45j, and 45l and via holes 32a to 32l formed thereon, a dielectric sheet 17 having the via holes 32a to 32l formed thereon, and a dielectric sheet 18 having conductor patterns 45a, 45c, 45e, 45g, 45i, 45k, and 45m formed on the top face of the dielectric sheet 18.

[0024] The conductor patterns 45a to 45m are electrically connected sequentially in series via the via holes 32a to 32l formed on the dielectric sheets 16 and 17 so as to form a spiral antenna line 40. One end of the spiral antenna line 40 (i.e., the conductor pattern 45a) is exposed to the left side of the conductor sheet 18 and the other end (i.e., the conductor pattern 45m) is exposed to the right side of the conductor sheet 18.

[0025] The conductor patterns 45b, 45f, and 45j

formed on the top surface of the dielectric sheet 16 have an equal length and are arranged alternately with and in parallel to the conductor patterns 45d, 45h, and 45i having a smaller length than that of the conductor patterns 45b, 45f, and 45j at intervals of a predetermined pitch. Similarly, the conductor patterns 45a, 45c, 45e, 45g, 45i, 45k, and 45m formed on the top surface of the dielectric sheet 18 also have an equal length and are arranged at intervals of a predetermined pitch. Furthermore, the via holes 32a, 32c, 32e, 32g, 32i, and 32k are alternately arranged in a staggered arrangement, and the via holes 32b, 32d, 32f, 32h, 32j, and 32l are alternately arranged in a staggered arrangement.

[0026] The opposing conductor 23 for adjusting the resonance frequency is formed in a position opposing the conductor patterns 45h to 45l and is electrically connected to the conductor pattern 45i via the via hole 32m.

[0027] The dielectric sheets 15 to 18 described above, as shown in Fig. 4, are sequentially deposited and unitarily burned so as to form a dielectric base body 11a as shown in Fig. 5. At both ends of the dielectric base body 11a, terminals 21 and 22 are respectively disposed. The terminal 21 is electrically connected to the conductor pattern 45a while the terminal 22 is electrically connected to the conductor pattern 45m.

[0028] In the chip antenna 2 formed as described above, as shown in Fig. 6, the antenna line 40 has a straight winding axis CL, and adjacent wound portions thereof have a different diameter. Since adjacent via holes (the via holes 32a, 32c, 32e, 32g, 32i, and 32k, for example) are arranged in a staggered arrangement, the distance P2 between adjacent via holes (the via holes 32a and 32c, for example) is larger than the spiral pitch P1 of the antenna line 40. Therefore, even when the spiral pitch P1 of the antenna line 40 is reduced to be smaller, the distance P2 between the adjacent via holes 32a and 32c can be larger than that of a conventional antenna line, so that limitation in manufacturing may be circumvented. Consequently, the minimum spiral pitch of the antenna line 40 can be smaller than that of a conventional one, thereby enabling the resonance frequency of the chip antenna 2 to be reduced approximately 20% smaller than that of a conventional chip antenna.

[0029] As is shown in Fig. 5, the opposing conductor 23 for adjusting the resonance frequency formed on the top surface of the dielectric base body 11a is cut by forming a slit 23a on the opposing conductor 23 using a laser, sandblasting, etching, a knife, etc. The area of the opposing conductor 23 for adjusting the resonance frequency being connected to the antenna line 40 is thereby reduced, enabling the resonance frequency of the chip antenna 2 to be changed. Accordingly, even after forming the dielectric base body 11a, the resonance frequency can be adjusted to be a desired value, thereby improving the yield of the chip antenna 2.

(Third Embodiment, Fig. 7)

[0030] Fig. 7 is a plan view of a chip antenna 3 according to a third embodiment. In the third embodiment, a spiral antenna line 60 is arranged in a dielectric base body 11b, in which the diameter of the spiral line 60 increases gradually as the winding proceeds.

[0031] Conductor patterns 65a to 65m formed in the dielectric base body 11b are electrically connected sequentially in series through via holes 52a to 52l formed in the dielectric base body 11b so as to form a spiral antenna line 60. The conductor patterns 65b, 65f, and 65j and the conductor patterns 65d, 65h, and 65l are arranged at intervals of a predetermined pitch and each length thereof increases gradually in order. The via holes 52b, 52d, 52f, 52h, 52j, and 52l are arranged in a staggered arrangement. The via holes 52a, 52c, 52e, 52g, 52i, and 52k are also arranged in a staggered arrangement.

[0032] In the chip antenna 3 formed as described above, just like in the second embodiment, the antenna line 60 has a straight winding axis CL, and adjacent wound portions thereof have a different diameter. Since adjacent via holes (the via holes 52a, 52c, 52e, 52g, 52i, and 52k, for example) are arranged in a staggered arrangement, the distance P2 between adjacent via holes (the via holes 52a and 52c, for example) is larger than the spiral pitch P1 of the antenna line 60. Therefore, even when the spiral pitch P1 of the antenna line 60 is reduced to be smaller, the distance P2 between the adjacent via holes 52a and 52c can be larger than that of a conventional antenna line, so that limitation in manufacturing may be circumvented. Consequently, the minimum spiral pitch of the antenna line 60 can be smaller than that of a conventional one, thereby enabling the resonance frequency of the chip antenna 3 to be reduced smaller than that of a conventional chip antenna.

(Other Embodiments)

[0033] The present invention is not limited to the above-described embodiments, however. Various modifications can be made within the scope of the invention. For example, in the embodiments, the cross-section of the spiral antenna line is rectangular; however it may have an arbitrary shape such as a substantially track shape having straight portions and curved portions or a semi-cylindrical shape. The dielectric base body may be spherical, cubic, cylindrical, conical, or pyramidal as well as being rectangular solid. The entire or part of the antenna line may be embedded into the base body. Also, the entire conductor patterns may be formed on a surface of the base body 11 by using the dielectric sheet 19 shown in Fig. 8 instead of the dielectric sheet 18 according to the first embodiment shown in Fig. 1. Furthermore, the base body may be formed from a magnetic material. One end of the antenna line may be open as shown in Fig. 9.

[0034] Although the present invention has been described in relation to particular embodiments thereof, many other variations and modifications and other uses will become apparent to those skilled in the art. It is preferred, therefore, that the present invention be limited not by the specific disclosure herein, but only by the appended claims.

Claims

1. A chip antenna (1) comprising:
 - a base body (11);
 - an antenna line (20) disposed on or in the base body (11) and being spirally wound; and
 - a feed terminal (21, 22) disposed on a surface of the base body (11) and being electrically connected to one end (25a, 25m) of the antenna line (20),

wherein the antenna line (20) has a winding axis which is arranged in a zigzag manner.
2. The chip antenna of claim 1, wherein the base body (11) comprises a plurality of laminations (16, 17, 18), at least two (16, 18) of the laminations having conductors (25a - 25m) disposed thereon with conductive via holes (12a-l) connecting the conductors (25b, d, f, h, j, l) on a first lamination (16) to conductors (45a, c, e, g, i, k) on a second lamination (18) thereby forming the spirally wound antenna line (20) having a rectangular cross section and having a defined pitch (P1) and wherein a distance (P2) between adjacent through holes (12a-l) is greater than the pitch (P1).
3. A chip antenna (2;3) comprising:
 - a base body (11a; 11b);
 - an antenna line (40; 60) disposed on or in the base body (11a; 11b) and being spirally wound; and
 - a feed terminal (21, 22) disposed on a surface of the base body 11a; 11b) and being electrically connected to one end of the antenna line (40; 60),

wherein the antenna line (40; 60) has a substantially straight winding axis, and adjacent wound portions have a different width.
4. The chip antenna (2) of claim 3, wherein the base body comprises a plurality of laminations (16, 17, 18), two (16, 18) of the laminations having conductors 45a - m) disposed thereon with conductive via holes (32a-l) connecting the conductors (45b, d, f, h, j, l) on a first lamination (16) to conductors (45a, c, e, g, i, k) on a second lamination (18) thereby forming the spirally wound antenna line (40) having a rectangular cross section and having a defined pitch (P1) and wherein a distance (P2) between adjacent through holes (32a-l) is greater than the pitch (P1).
5. A chip antenna (1; 2; 3) of Claim 1 or 3, further comprising:
 - a plurality of conductor patterns (25a - m; 45a - m; 65a - m) disposed in the base body (11; 11a; 11b); and
 - via holes (12a-l; 32a-l; 52a-l),

wherein the antenna line (20; 40; 60) is formed by electrically connecting the plurality of conductor patterns (25a - m; 45a - m; 65a - m) in series by the via holes (12a-l; 32a-l; 52a-l) which are arranged in the base body (11; 11a; 11b) in a staggered arrangement.
6. The chip antenna (1; 2; 3) of claim 1, 3 or 5 further comprising an opposing conductor (23) for adjusting the resonance frequency, wherein the opposing conductor (23) opposes at least one (45h-l) of the plurality of conductor patterns (45a - m) forming the antenna line (40) and is electrically connected to part (45i) of the plurality of conductor patterns (45a - m).
7. The chip antenna 1;2 of claim 1, wherein the antenna line has a substantially rectangular cross section.
8. The chip antenna (1; 2; 3) of claim 1, 3 or 5 wherein the base body (11; 11a; 11b) comprises one of a dielectric and a magnetic element.
9. The chip antenna 1 of claim 2, wherein adjacent conductors on at least one of the laminations (16, 18) have equal lengths.
10. The chip antenna (2) of claim 4, wherein adjacent conductors on both laminations (16, 18) have unequal lengths.
11. The chip antenna (2) of claim 4, wherein the width of adjacent conductors (45a - m) on at least one of the laminations (16, 18) increases from a first end of the base body (11a) to a second end.
12. The chip antenna of claim 1 or wherein the antenna line (20; 40; 60) has a terminal (21) for connection to a power feed at one end (25a).
13. The chip antenna of claim 12, wherein the antenna line (20; 40; 60) has a second end (25m) that is pro-

vided to a second terminal (22) or left unconnected.

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FIG.1

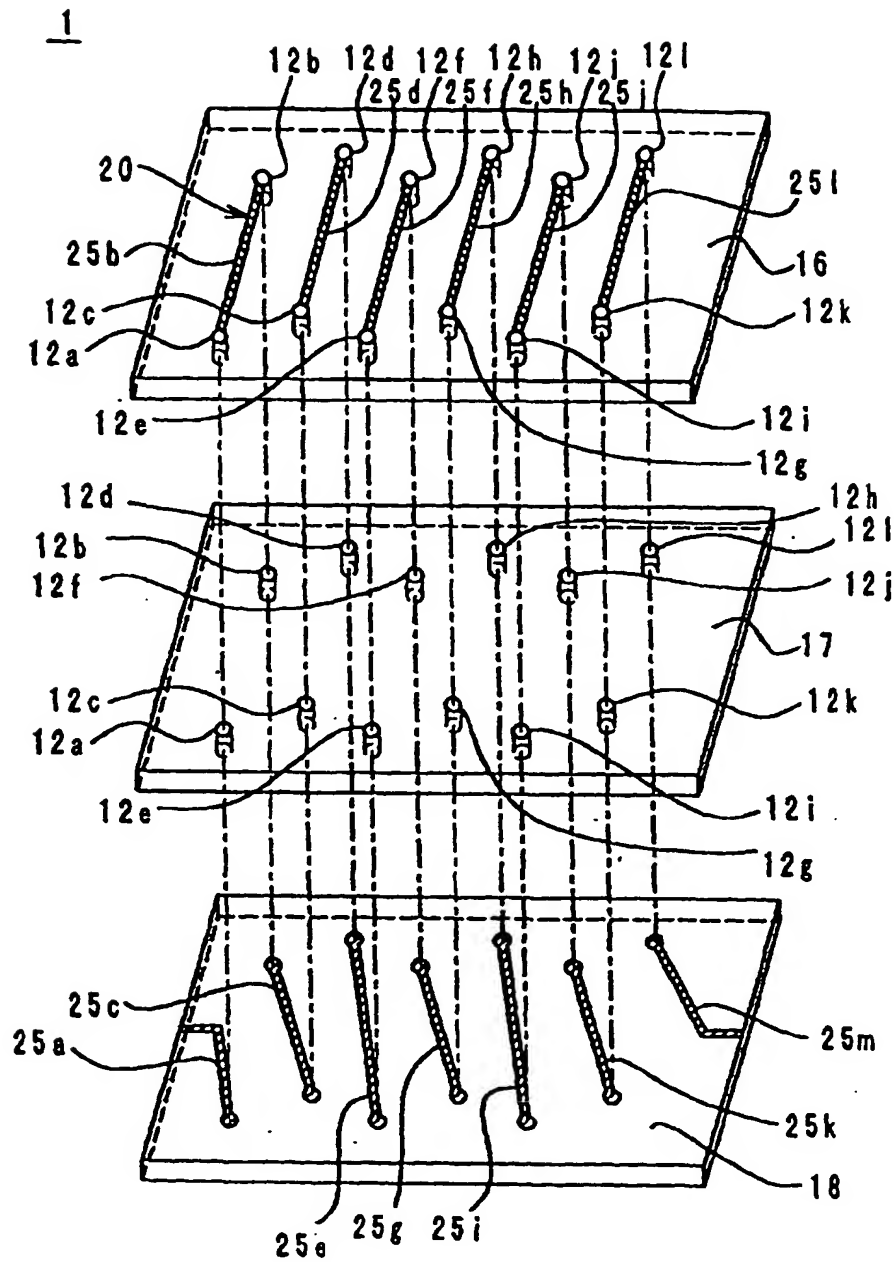


FIG.2

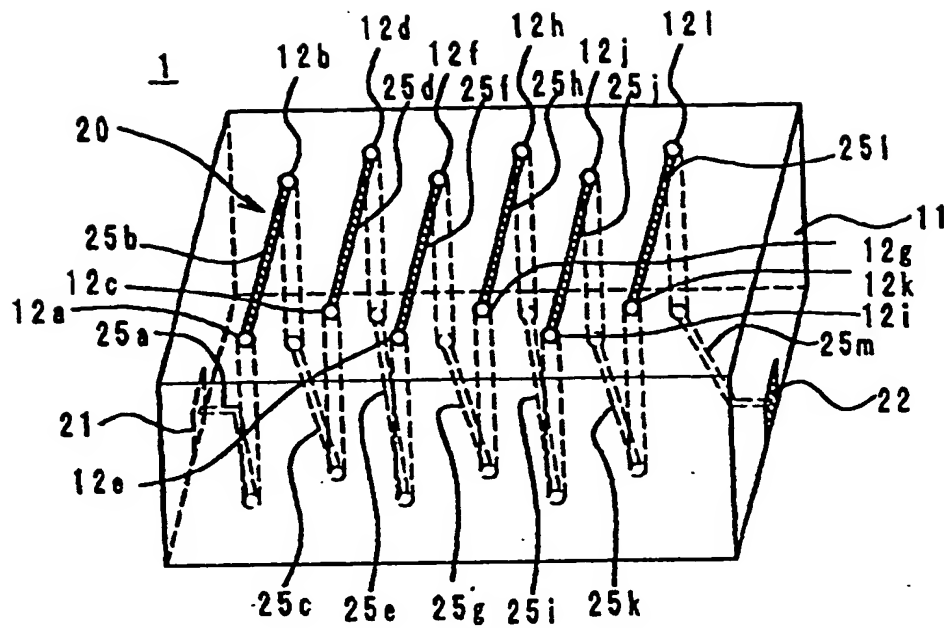


FIG.3

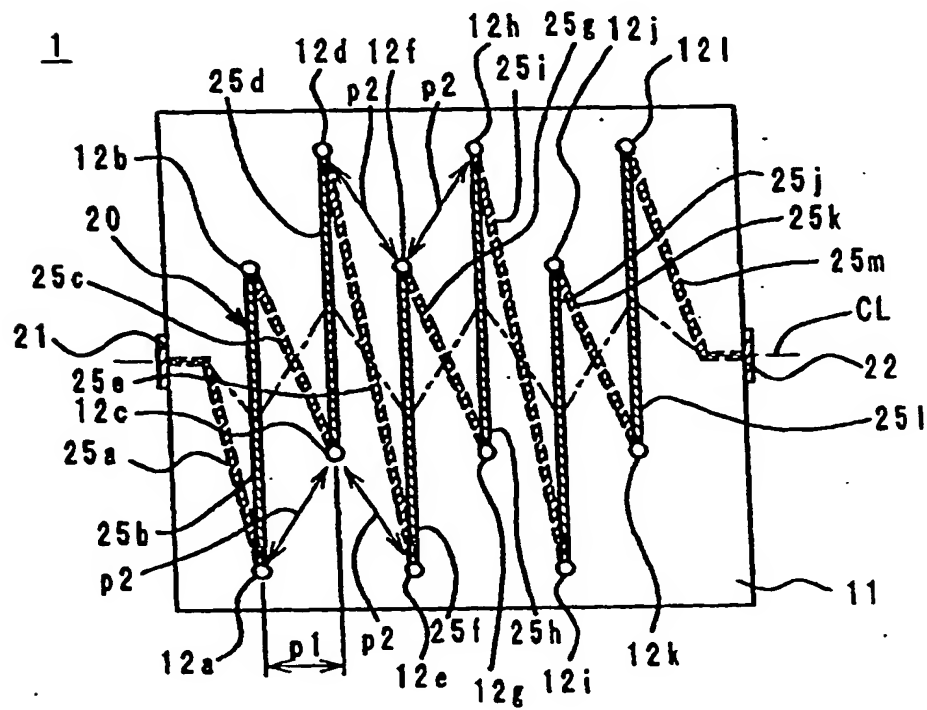


FIG.4

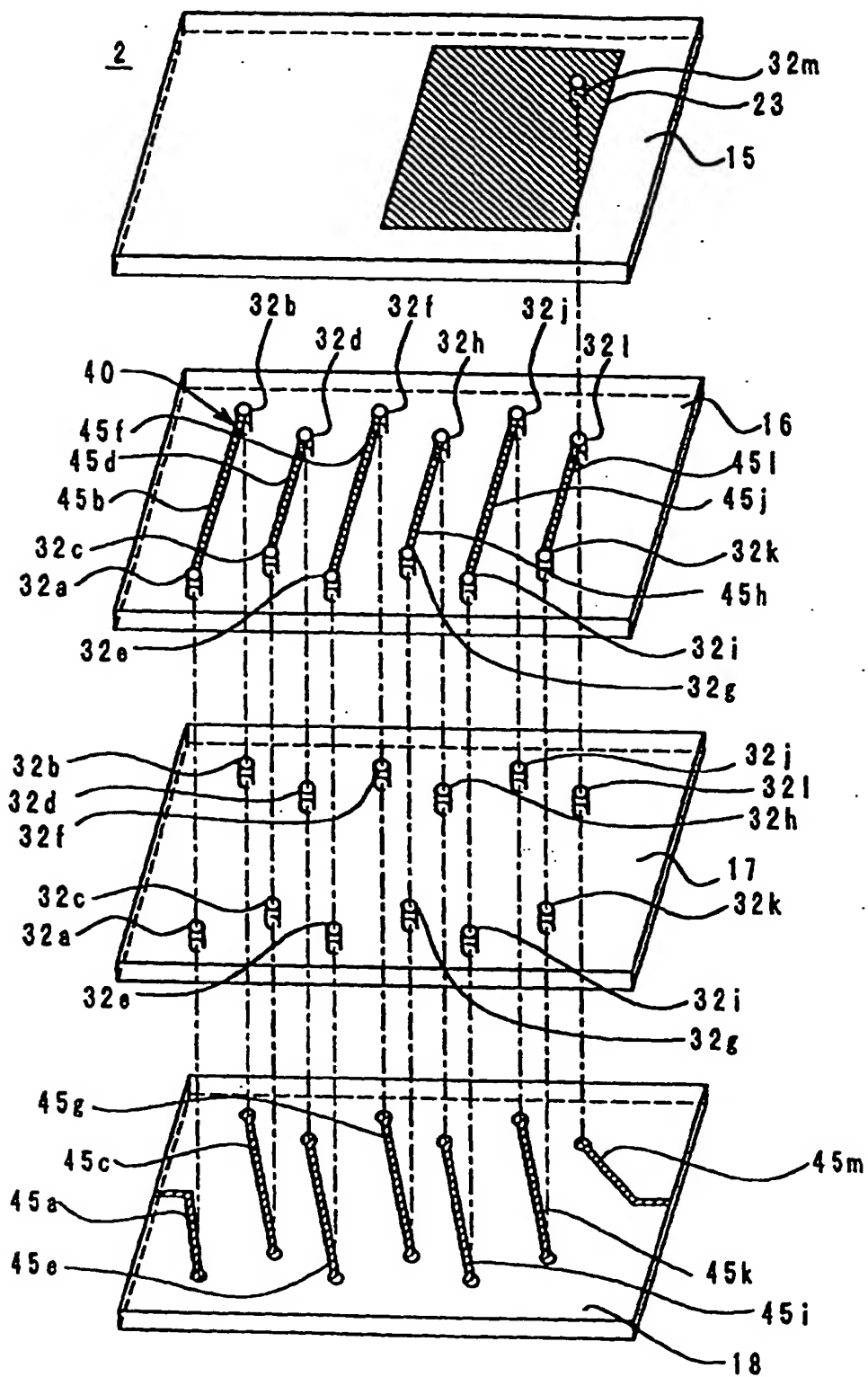


FIG.5

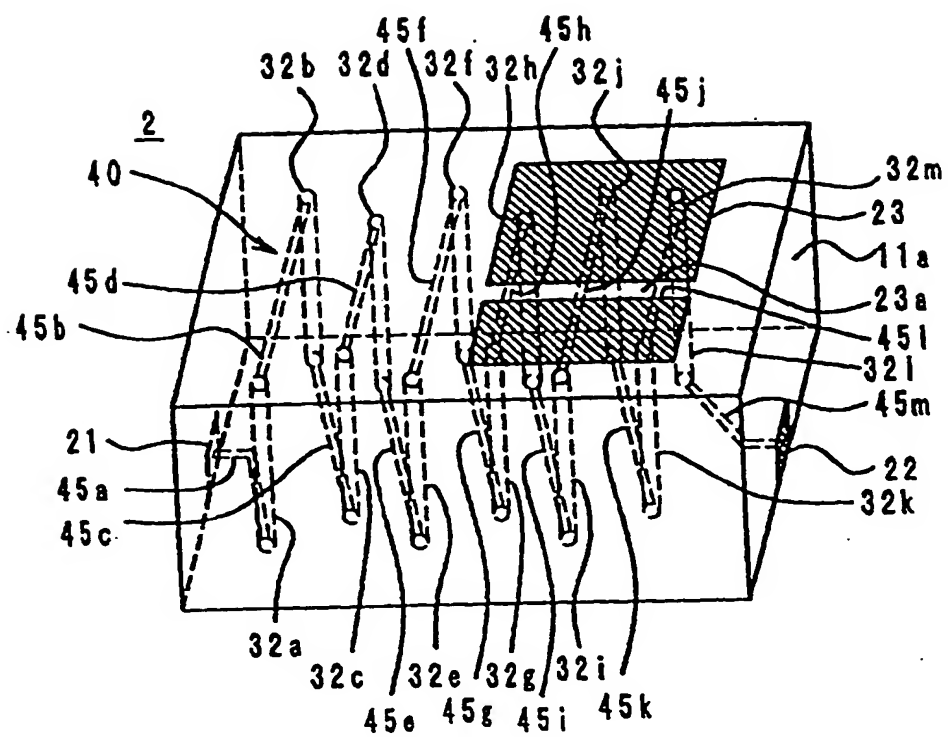


FIG.8

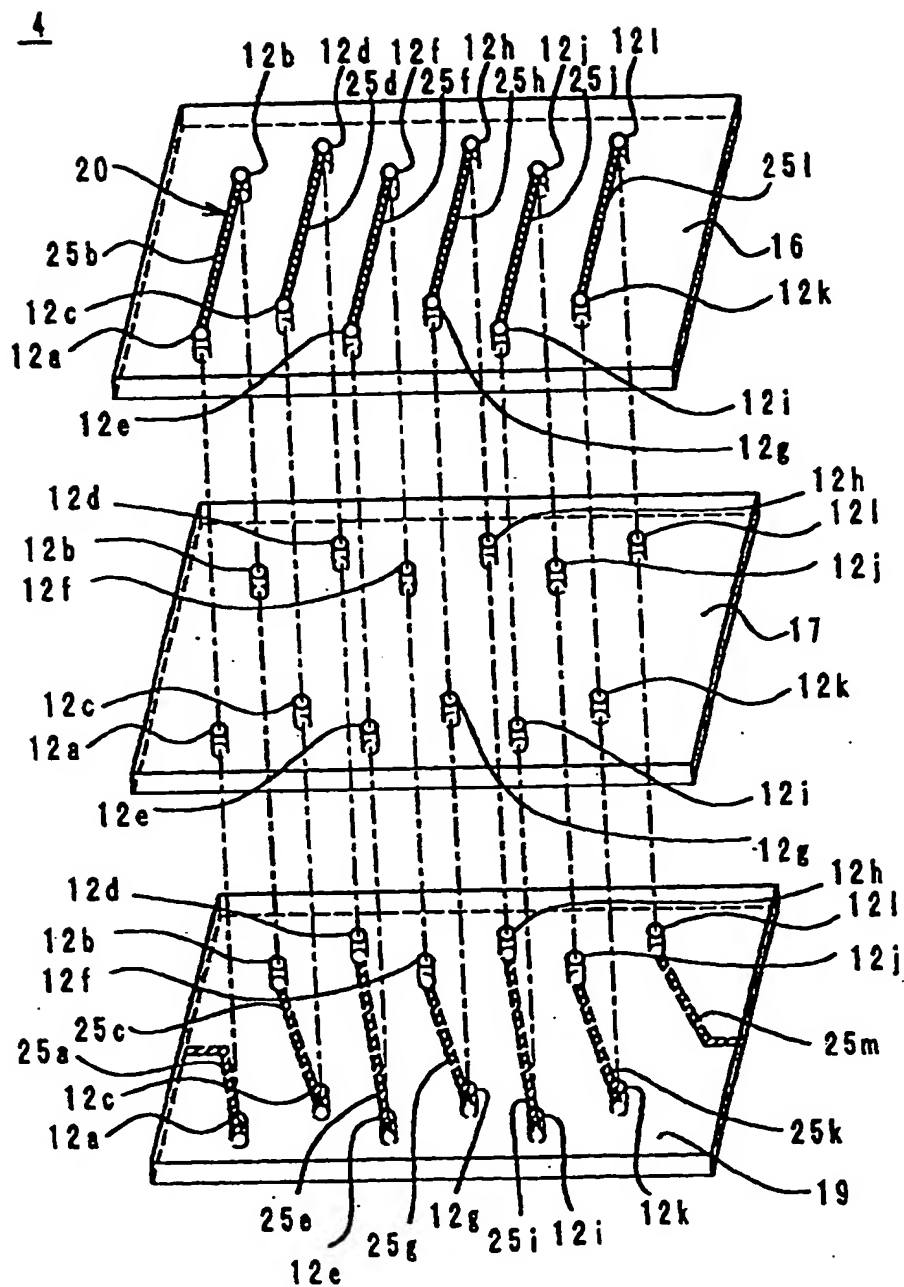


FIG.9

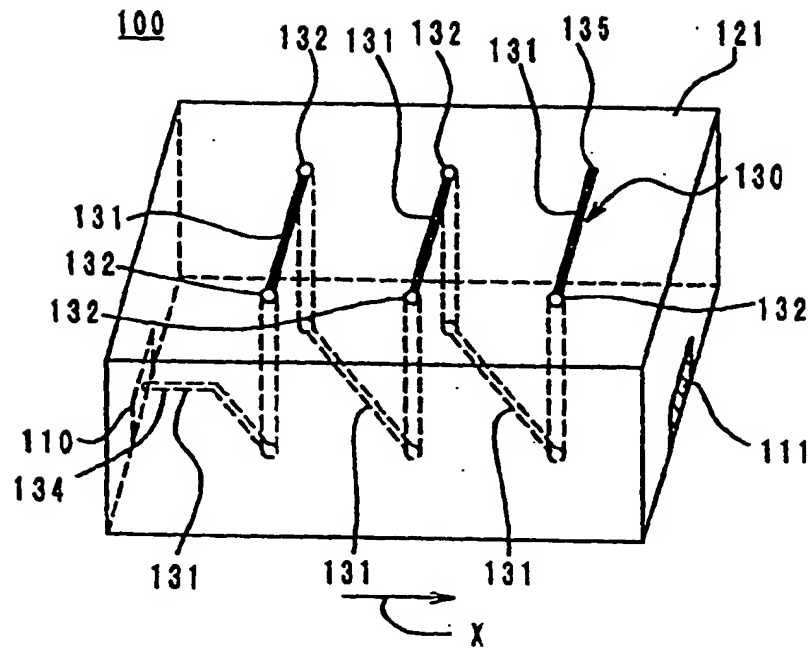
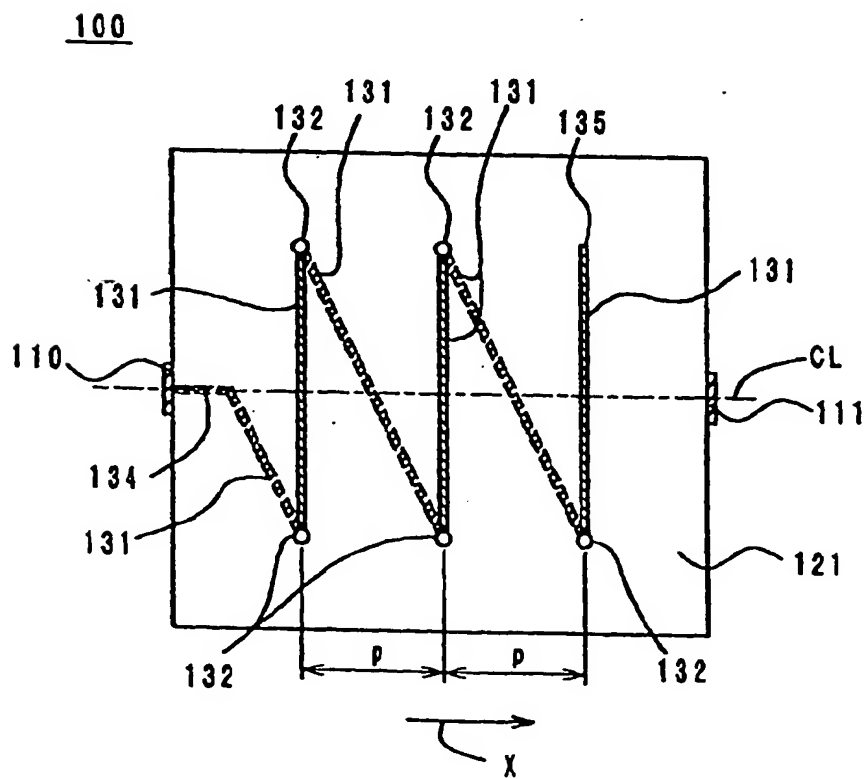


FIG.10





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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

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EP 01 11 6452

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The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search MUNICH		Date of completion of the search 21 November 2001	Examiner von Walter, S-U
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